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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: LAUNCH OF OES-FUNDED PROJECT CONCERNING LAND-BASED
SOURCES OF MARINE POLLUTION

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DISTRIBUTION.

1. (SBU) Embassy Brasilia, in conjunction with the Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science (OES), has awarded a USD 75,000 grant to support the reduction of land-based sources of marine pollution in Brazil. The request for proposals was issued on February 20, 2009 and there were four responses submitted by the deadline of March 31, 2009. The Embassy's review panel selected the proposal submitted by the Department of Genetics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). The UFRJ will be responsible for developing the project over the next two years.

2. (SBU) The project is focused on the land-based sources of pollution which affect the Abrolhos Reef Bank, located off the northeastern coast of Brazil. This reef is one of the most important reef biomes in the world. The region also sustains important fishing activity that represents the main source of food and employment for thousands of people. The main reef-building coral species of the region are under great risk of extinction due to the increasing pollution and sedimentation related to pesticides used by the region's intensive wood farming industry. The residues of these chemicals are discharged into the nearby Abrolhos Bank. The result is a significant decline in the coral coverage which corresponds to the expansion of wood related agribusiness in the region. The degradation of the reef systems can be reversed, if the local stressors are reduced by means of better farm management practices.

3. (SBU) The project consists of three phases: initial data collection to establish a baseline for the current health of the Abrolhos Reef; the screening and identification of bio-control agents that could replace existing pesticides and fungicides; and a pilot project in which these new agents will be used in a small scale pilot project. By the end of the project, the grantee will have selected appropriate bio-control microorganisms and conducted field trials in cooperation with local wood farmers. The improved farming practices developed by this project will be replicable and will have implications for the future management, protection, and recovery of coral reefs.

4. (SBU) The principal investigator (PI) for this project is a professor at UFRJ, the largest federal university of Brazil, and his research team consists of highly qualified researchers who have managed grants from different national and international agencies and belong to renowned Brazilian institutions. The grant will allow that a successful and previously collaborating team tackles an important issue related to marine pollution in Brazil.

KUBISKE